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CIA director charges news organizations with publishing government secrets

A Central Intelligence Agency Director William J. Casey has asked the Justice Department to consider prosecuting five news organizations for "five absolutely cold violations" of federal laws prohibiting disclosure about government intelligence gathering activities.

Casey recently met with *Washington Post* executive editor Benjamin C. Bradlee and managing editor Leonard Downie to inform them that he asked the Justice Department to consider prosecuting that newspaper and *Newsweek*, which is owned by the Washington Post Co., for publishing stories on U.S. intercepts of messages between the Tripoli and the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin.

Casey also told the Post editors that he wanted Justice to also consider prosecuting the *New York Times*, *Washington Times* and *Time* magazine, although he did not specify any stories published by them which he felt violated intelligence laws.

The Post reported in a May 7 front page story that Casey also warned the newspaper against publishing another story it was preparing on U.S. intelligence capabilities.

"I'm not threatening you," the

Post quoted Casey as saying. "But you've got to know that if you publish this, I would recommend that you be prosecuted under the intelligence statute."

The Post noted that Casey did not cite any specific statute. However, the newspaper noted that in 1950 Congress enacted legislation making it a crime to disclose classified information about ciphers, codes, cryptographic systems and other types of communications systems used in intelligence gathering. The "Comint Statute," Section 798 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The New York Times also published a story about Casey's wanting to prosecute news organizations, but the story did not list the Times as one of the newspapers who received a warning from Casey.

Times executive editor A.M. Rosenthal said the newspaper "published all the information we had. Our reporter (Philip Shenon) was not told about the New York Times."

Rosenthal said he has no information about whether his newspaper is one of the news organizations the CIA wants to prosecute.